

International Critical Thought



ISSN: 2159-8282 (Print) 2159-8312 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rict20

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To cite this article: Cheng Enfu & Xin Xiangyang (2011) Fundamental elements of the China model, International Critical Thought, 1:1, 2-10

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2011.566028





Fundamental elements of the China model

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The present study takes as its departure point theoretical reflections on the concept of 'model' for a discussion of the China model in particular, a model that has attracted increasing attention all over the world due to China's dramatic development. It surveys the origin and major conceptualizations of the China model in both the Chinese and the international context and presents on that basis a series of fundamental constituents of the China model in relation to China's economic, political, cultural and social development. Its central point is that the China model expresses socialism with Chinese characteristics, and therefore constitutes a developing country model with qualities that are specific to the Chinese context.

Keywords: China model; socialism with Chinese characteristics

China's dramatic economic development has attracted increasing attention all over the world. Topics such as the Beijing Consensus and the China model have become the focal point of discussions in mainstream academia. At the same time, theoretical problems have started to emerge with regards to the very existence, content, and prospects of the China model.

I. What constitutes a model and what constitutes the China model?

First and foremost, the very concept of a model needs to be clarified. The Dictionary of Modern Chinese explains the word 'model' (moshi 模式) as a standard form that offers guidance to be followed. The term has been criticized: for example, Engels' Anti-Dühring of 1876–1878 critiques Dühring's 'world schematism' by pointing out that he plagiarized and that his so-called 'sharp division of the general effect-schemata' and the roots of his 'deep-rooted basic schemata' both came from the beginning part of Hegel's Logic on being. Dühring uses the term schematism in its philosophical sense, in that the world was created according to a certain paradigm, which Engels calls philosophizing in the 'cage of the Hegelian schematism of categories' (Engels 1954, 66–8). The definition of model adopted in the present study, according to a Marxist perspective and methodology, is that a model summarizes the internal mechanism of an object and the various ways in which the inherent qualities of such an object are systematically exhibited. A model's fundamental characteristics are its internality – it is a manifestation of inner nature – and externality – it has an external mode of expression. It is a neutral term widely used within academia at home and abroad, with no positive or negative connotation necessarily

ISSN 2159-8282 print/ISSN 2159-8312 online © 2011 Chinese Academy of Social Sciences DOI: 10.1080/21598282.2011.566028

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attached to it. However, when linked to concrete events, it exhibits different characteristics and effects and can be used objectively for research, reference or criticism, thus producing different outcomes. An example is the critique and renunciation of the Latin American neo-liberal model by public opinion in Latin America and the whole world.

Secondly, the specific meaning of the China model has been explained from different angles by a number of scholars. Some state that it refers to the sum total of the concepts, strategies, policies, practices and problems of socialism with Chinese characteristics since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and particularly since reform and opening to the outside world in 1978 (Zhao and Naisbitt 2010, 11). Others look at the China model as an experience that serves as a reference for developing countries and is a question of values for Western countries, particularly the United States (Zheng 2010, 2). Still others argue that it should be understood as a concentrated summation of China's three decades of reform and opening to the outside world and its modernization, with its clear and distinctive internal regulation. The essence of the China model is that it opened up a path towards modernization for a late developing country that, against the background of globalization, combined the principles of scientific socialism with both the concrete situation in China and the specific characteristics of our era (Zhang, 2009). All of these make sense but none is completely accurate. We believe that a grasp of the China model entails a stress on the following dimensions. The China model represents the Sinicization of Marxism, rather than of neo-liberalism or Confucian socialism; it represents a socialist model rather than one of crony capitalism or some sort of social democracy; and it represents the model of a large developing country rather than that of a Western developed country or a small developing country. China's development is definitely inseparable from the interests of developing countries.

Thirdly, a distinction is necessary between the notion of the China model, the China path, the China experience and the China case. It is a popular perception that the use of 'China model' rather than China path leads to misrepresentation and over-estimation of development in China. This concern was in fact addressed in President Hu Jintao's Report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2007, which states that 'taking the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics means we will, under the leadership of the CPC and in light of China's basic conditions, take economic development as the central task, adhere to the Four Cardinal Principles and persevere in reform and opening up, release and develop the productive forces, consolidate and improve the socialist system, develop the socialist market economy, socialist democracy, an advanced socialist culture and a harmonious socialist society, and make China a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious modern socialist country' (Hu 2007). What is contained in this summary of the China path is closely connected with the connotations of the China model, except that the two are presented from different perspectives with different degree of specificity. It is erroneous to use the West's 'universal values' to reject the China path or model formed over three decades of reform and development or to argue that the United States and Sweden offer the best model.

Again, some scholars argue that China has experience but this experience does not fall under the unified category of a model. Some say it cannot even be defined as providing lessons from experience, but only as China's individual case. My response is that China has indeed had many cases of successful economic, political, cultural and social development, and it is precisely these cases and their common characteristics that make up the China experience. The China experience is not just something conceptual, but implies a successful development path and institutional arrangements. The China experience has thus developed into the China model.

With regard to the experiences and conceptualization of the achievements in China's three decades of reform, see the following summary in the report of the Seventeenth National Congress of CPC:

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It is no surprise that some Western scholars prefer the term 'China model' to China path, in accordance with their attempt to neutralize or remove the ideological content of the term through removing from it the content of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This makes it all the more necessary for us to explicitly connect the China model with the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics with the great goal for which we are fighting. An example is Dialogue: the China Model, in which Naisbitt states: (1) 'What is transpiring in China today proceeds under a fresh paradigm that stipulates entirely new methods of governance and management, which means "socialism" is no longer a sufficient term to describe it; (2) 'In Europe, any mention of Chinese characteristics immediately makes most people think of Communism and other ideological associations that are most often negative in nature. In actuality, this is harmful to China'; (3) 'China should not wrap itself in the old cocoon of Communism. When you've already turned into a butterfly, you should spread your wings and fly high, not hide away in those old ideas from the past' (Zhao and Naisbitt 2010, 14). It is quite obvious from this that scholars such as Naisbitt have not correctly understood the nature of either the China path or the China model. Whether it is a matter of turning into a butterfly or soaring high in the sky, the driving force of China's development comes precisely from the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It should be noted that the full name of the China model is the model of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which makes the nature and content of the China model self-evident.

II. Basic contents of the China model

Ever since the Sixteenth National Congress of the CPC, Secretary General Hu Jintao and the Central Committee of the Party have had the implementation of the scientific concept of development and the construction of a harmonious society as their guiding principle and primary task, which also constitutes a continuation of Deng Xiaoping's theory and Jiang Zemin's proposition of the 'three represents'. One of the consequences of such strategic arrangements is that an additional element, i.e., social development, has become an integral part of the original trinity of economic, political, and cultural construction in the overall disposition of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This new quadruple structure has been created on the basis of an improved understanding by the CPC of the laws that govern the leadership of the Communist Party, socialist construction and the development of human society in general.

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The Party has combined adhering to the basic tenets of Marxism with adapting it to Chinese conditions, upholding the Four Cardinal Principles with adhering to the reform and opening up policy, respecting the people's pioneering initiative with strengthening the Party's leadership, adhering to the basic system of socialism with developing the market economy, effecting changes in the economic base with promoting reform of the superstructure, developing the productive forces with improving the cultural and ethical quality of the whole nation, raising efficiency with promoting social equity, pursuing independent development with taking part in economic globalization, promoting reform and development with maintaining social stability, and advancing the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics with making progress in the great new undertaking to build the Party. In this course the Party has gained invaluable experience in eliminating poverty, accelerating modernization, and consolidating and developing socialism in a large developing country of over one billion people.

² The 'Three Represents' refers to the idea that the Communist Party represents the development trend of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people.

Therefore, an accurate understanding of China model is conditional on a grasp of the overall disposition of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which guides the overall development of the socialist market economy, socialist democratic politics, advanced socialist culture and a harmonious socialist society.

The first layer of the quadruple structure is the economic system of 'four primacies'. First, the primacy of public ownership in a system of multiple forms of ownership, i.e., domestic and foreign private enterprises are developed under the precondition of the qualitative and quantitative priority of the public economy. The primacy of public ownership is demonstrated in the structure of capital investment, employment, gross domestic product (GDP), taxation and foreign trade. This macro-ownership structure of 'primary-supplementary' should be maintained in the dynamic development of multiple forms of ownership. Second, the primacy of labor value in a multi-factor distribution system, which balances equity and efficiency in economic development by prioritizing the principle of 'to each according to his labor' while allowing the owners of other production factors to participate in the distribution process. A specific measure to that end is genuinely fair distribution through 'raising low-end income, enlarging the middle income group and controlling high-end income'. Third, the primacy of state adjustment within a market system with multiple structures. This stresses the comprehensive development of the market system in order to achieve optimum allocation of basic resources, with the state playing a guiding role in a transparent, economic, democratic and efficient manner. Fourth, the primacy of self-reliance within a multidimensional open system, with a balance between the introduction of foreign technology and capital and the self-reliant development of intellectual property and efficient use of domestic resources. It is a system of economic relationships that necessarily stresses both domestic and foreign demand, though the former has priority. The goal is to achieve the transformation from an extensive open model that prioritizes quantity towards an open model that prioritizes quality and productivity, with the consequent transformation of China from a big trading country to a country with strong trade and a strong economy.

The second layer is the political framework that includes three unified elements and four institutional levels as explained below. The path of socialism with Chinese characteristics consists of the organic unity of the Party's leadership, the people as master and rule by law. Such unity is an essential requirement of the China model. Specifically, the Party's leadership is the core, creating the most fundamental conditions and broadest space for the power of the people as master through ensuring the correct direction, scientific framework, efficient implementation and smooth participation for the politics of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Then the fact that the people are the master, as the primary goal of socialist politics, means that they are the source of all power and have the right to manage the major affairs of the nation, elect all government officials including leaders of the state and monitor officials elected by them. It follows that rule by law is the basic guideline by which the people govern the country under the leadership of the Party. It is a governance that cannot exist without the Party's leadership, nor can it survive without the people as master of their own country. The three elements necessarily form an organic unity in that the ultimate goal of the Party's leadership is to achieve governance by the people as master according to the law and the constitution; the people become master under the leadership of the Party and regulation of the law; and rule by law is preconditioned on the leadership of the Party and the supervision by the people.

At the institutional level, it is a path that relies on the maintenance and improvement of a system that consists of the People's Congress; cooperation between multiple parties and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China; autonomous ethnic minority regions; and the people's autonomy at the grass-roots level.

The third layer is cultural life, where the China model has 'one system, two primacies'. Since the Sixteenth National Congress in 2002, the Party has come to recognize this as an essential constituent within the overall development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, an important source of national cohesion and creativity, an indispensable element in the evaluation of the comprehensive competitiveness of a nation, and an important demand in the intellectual and spiritual life of the people. The advanced culture of socialism referred to here is represented by the core value system of socialism, which is comprised of the guiding ideas of Marxism, the common goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, national spirit centered on patriotism, the spirit of the times with reform and innovation as its core, and the contents of ethical citizenship. With such a value system, cultural development in China has always followed the path of innovative reform and technological advance, eliminating institutional obstacles to progress and liberating and improving culturally productive forces. Specifically, there have been national-level measures to maintain balanced and coordinated development in three areas, namely, a balance between cultural industries that serve the public interest and operational cultural industries; a balance between a public system of cultural services that covers both urban and rural areas and the prosperity of socialist cultural industries and the cultural market; and a balance between stress on profit and stress on management. One of the important consequences of this development is the formation of conditions for the primacy of both public ownership and national culture in the domain of cultural development. Just as Li Changchun (2008, 181) stated, 'in terms of the structure of cultural development, there must be a clear primacy of public ownership in a cultural industry structure with multiple forms of ownership and a clear primacy of national culture in the cultural market and the process of introducing beneficial cultural contents from other cultures'.

Finally, the China model has a layer of social development that has evolved around the idea of building a harmonious socialist society as explicitly laid out in the Sixth Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CPC in 2006.

The progress to that end has been illustrated in the construction of a 'system of social management that is based on healthy leadership of the Party Committee as well as responsible government at various levels, social coordination, and public participation' (Central Committee of the CPC 2008b, 662). There has been continuous development of this system of social management in terms of coordination between mechanisms of state adjustment and social adjustment, mutual support between state administration and social autonomy and the interaction of state power and social forces in various forms. Thus a network has been formed with effective mechanisms for interest coordination, appeals by the people, conflict mediation and rights protection. Quite obviously, China has a clear model in its social construction.

III. Some clarification

Other than the basic contents of China model, some related issues also need to be clarified, such as the origin of the term, the status of the model's growth, its replicability and existing challenges and critiques.

III.i. Who first put forward the term 'China model'?

Many scholars attribute the origin of the term 'China model' to Ramo's 'Beijing Consensus'. As Zhang and Xu (2007) states, 'On May 11, 2004, Joshua Cooper Ramo, senior advisor to Goldman Sachs and guest professor at Tsinghua University, gave a talk entitled "Beijing Consensus," in which he provided a comprehensive and rational analysis of China's twenty-odd years of economic reform and its achievements. He pointed out that China had found a development model suited to its specific circumstances, that is, the "China model".' Contrary to Xu's record, however, the use of the term can be traced back much further than Ramo's talk.

As early as the 1980s, the China model repeatedly appeared in Deng Xiaoping's talks. In May 1980, while addressing an important principle in dealing with the relationship between

Communist Parties from different countries, he stated that 'the Chinese revolution did not follow the model of the Soviet revolution', and 'since our own revolution is based on the adaptation of Marxism within the specific context of China, there is no reason for us to expect other developing countries to proceed with their revolution according to the model of China, not to mention expecting developed countries to adopt the China model' (Deng 1994, 318). Then, on 18 May 1988, during his meeting with the president of the People's Republic of Mozambique, he pointed out that 'problems around the world cannot be solved with one model. China has its own model, and so should Mozambique' (Deng 1993, 261). What Deng refers to as the China model, together with the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics frequently referred to by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, has profound implications: that is, the success of the Chinese revolution, socialist construction, and reform alike rely on China's choosing its own path rather than replicating what had worked for other countries. We should have the courage and skill to connect the basic principles of Marxism to our own realities and the conditions of the times and experiment with a dynamic and vigorous new path instead of sticking to an old path that has proved an isolated impasse. We should never change our flag or give up the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist path.

III.ii. Is the China model a mature one?

The perception that the China model is not mature is based on the idea that a mature model such as that observed in developed countries involves a high level of economic development and has stood the test of time in different environments, while the China model, despite its three decades of impressive development, has not yet lasted sufficiently long or reached a sufficiently high level. Since China today is still in the midst of change, everything is yet to be settled and will remain so for some time to come. In fact, such reasoning is obviously ill-founded. For one thing, a mature model in a developed country does not necessarily emerge only when that country is highly developed economically. This can easily be seen in both Germany and Japan, where, on the contrary, prolonged economic growth was achieved through the momentum provided by a mature model. I would argue that, based on what was elaborated in the previous section, China has a mature model in every sense, be it economic, political, cultural or social. This fact is also reflected in the CPC's consistent stress on systemic stabilization. As Jiang Zemin stated on 11 October 2000 at the Fifth Plenum of the Fifteenth Central Committee of the CPC, 'the goal of our reform is to achieve a congruency between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production and to establish mature and stable systems in every aspect of our socialist society' (Jiang 2006, 120). Ever since the Sixteenth National Congress of the Party, the new leadership has emphatically reiterated the issue of institutional stabilization. On 20 December 2003, Zeng Qinghong concluded in his talk at the National Human Resources Meeting that 'the idea of improving the system of the socialist market economy, as laid out in the Third Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CPC in 2003, ultimately means a stabilized economic system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Deng Xiaoping also suggested during his 1992 inspection tour in southern China that "it probably will take thirty years for us to form in various aspects for our society a set of more mature and fixed systems, under which we will have more stabilized principles and policies." The set of systems Deng referred to certainly includes the institutions of the Party's leadership, organization, and personnel appointments' (Central Committee of the CPC 2008a, 612).

III.iii. Is the China model applicable in other countries?

Undoubtedly, the China model has affected choices in economic and social development in quite a few other countries. As the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh put it in his talk at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on 15 January 2008, China's reform has provided impetus for development in India. He stated that 'in the past few decades, China's opening to the outside world has not only greatly benefited itself, but greatly benefited India economically during its transformation. I have to admit that the success of China is one of the forces that has pushed forward changes in India, which began in the 1980s and have profoundly expanded since 1991' (Singh 2008). In the Middle East too, the China model has come to function as a reference. In October 2007, King Abdullah II of Jordan pointed out during his visit to China that 'the development model of China has become a model from which many Middle Eastern countries learn. China is an important nation in international relations, and its voice attracts a lot of attention here' (Su and Zhu 2007). The Iranian leader has also welcomed the China model. In her summary of its practical and theoretical significance, Regina Abrami (2009) of the Harvard Business School points out that 'practically, "the China model" may not be completely applicable to other developing countries, but it certainly provides an option and a valuable perspective; theoretically, it overthrows traditional perceptions such as the idea that state-owned enterprises are inefficient and a powerful newly emerging nation must be bellicose and aggressive, as well as the established idea that economic growth necessarily leads to Western democracy'.

III.iv. International and domestic challenges to the China model

In the report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the CPC, there was the recognition that the developed countries' economic and technological advantages will last for a long time, leading inevitably to increasing challenges, some already visible, others still unforeseeable. Then, in the Fourth Plenum of the Seventeenth Central Committee of the CPC in 2009, there was again a stress on the potential state of uncertainty and instability in a situation of increasingly intense global competition in which developed countries were still leading in the economic and technological spheres. What exactly are the uncertainties that challenge the China model of development? For one thing, of primary importance is the question of how we can avoid ever more severe social conflict. Recent years have witnessed a rapid rise in the number of incidents of mass disturbance. Statistics show that such incidents amounted to 8700 in 1993, 10,000 in 1994, 11,000 in 1995, 12,000 in 1996, 17,000 in 1997, 25,000 in 1998, 32,000 in 1999, 40,000 in 2000, and 74,000 in 2005. Since 2007, the frequency has remained at about 90,000 a year, while the number of people involved each year has increased from 730,000 to 5,760,000. For another, what is the probability of clashes between China and other countries? It would not be surprising if a rising China as a world power were to find itself in international relations that include both cooperative win-win situations and competition in already-established territories of interests. For example, China's development of large commercial aircraft will certainly affect the share of the Chinese market enjoyed by the United States' Boeing and Europe's Airbus. In 2005 the US State Department fined Boeing \$47 million for selling nine commercial aircraft to China between 2000 and 2003 that were fitted with an electronic chip with defense applications without having an export license to do so, in violation of the US Arms Control Act. Another example is China's development of high speed rail and the resulting discontent from Japanese and German corporations. In recent years, Chinese companies have learned much through their joint projects with foreign enterprises and have thus successfully built a platform for advanced design and manufacturing in engine technology. China has formed its own fully-fledged system of sustainable research, development and manufacturing. One of its most important achievements in self-sufficient technological innovation in modern rail is the research and development of motors for high speed trains with large sleeping compartments. This has not been welcomed by Western companies. On 2 January 2009, the French company Alstom accused China of excluding foreign companies from bidding for domestic projects. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, its CEO Philippe Mellier called on companies in the West to boycott China-manufactured locomotives.

Responding to these challenges requires scientific concepts. First and foremost, we need to be conscious of the fact that reform per se is a task full of risks. As Deng Xiaoping points out, there is no 100% safe plan for reform. The only secure way is to proceed relatively steadily through picking the right way and the right time. 'It is impossible not to err, but we must try to avoid disastrous mistakes by timely adjustment. Reform is a risky cause, but I believe it is also a feasible one. This optimism is not unfounded. At the same time, we need to focus on preparatory work for the riskier projects, so that it will not be the end of the world even if we have to face major risks' (Deng 1993, 267). He also emphasized that there is no such thing as never taking risks and always being 100% certain and completely successful when embarking on an undertaking. Secondly, we must equip ourselves with a consciousness of hardship. 'One becomes stronger forging through hardship but weaker when living at one's ease' is an old saying that Jiang Zemin guoted a lot. This awareness of risk is absolutely necessary when we confront the penetration and the destructive activities of hostile international forces and their political plots to overturn the Communist Party and the socialist system, splittist activities aimed at splitting ethnic minorities and violent acts of terrorism. In this respect, innocence and naivety are absolutely lethal. Finally, in epistemological terms, we must equip ourselves with dialectical materialism in our effort to deal with the contradictions between the finite and the infinite and between the known and the unknown during the process of understanding the world and must improve our understanding of the external forces of the objective world, especially those that dominate people's daily lives.

III.v. Is the China model pragmatic?

In his 2005 article 'A study of some questions about the China model', Thomas Heberer, Director of the Center of East Asian Studies in the Department of Political Science of the University of Duisburg-Essen, argues that political pragmatism constitutes the most distinctive feature of the China model of development. He summarizes this political pragmatism as the follows. 'Economically, there is the transformation from the planned economy towards the market economy, or the economization of politics; politically, the Communist Party of China has already transformed from a party of class into a party of the people; ideologically, the goal of the government is no longer a Utopian "Communism", but rather a not-so-distant "harmonious society"; the legitimacy of the regime is no longer based upon an ideology but on commitments about modernization, increasing the power of the nation, maintenance of stability, building socialist democracy, etc. A number of cases demonstrate this political pragmatism, such as the shift from a planned to a market economy in economic reform, allowing an element of private ownership in the course of development, allowing the entrance of foreign capital, tacit consent to dramatic social change, and so on. We can even make out China's political pragmatism in the changes to the Charter of the Communist Party of China' (Heberer 2005, 10). This is a misconception about a model under the guidance of the Marxist outlook. It confuses respect for social realities, being true to the facts, and a down-to-earth manner with political pragmatism. In the effort to achieve the goal of the preliminary stage of socialism, the CPC has always stressed the great goal of Communism. With people as the departure point of its work, it has set the goal of ensuring the fundamental interests of the people, who are the true masters and innovative force of the country. The path taken by the CPC is one of collective prosperity and all-round development. Development is for the people and is achieved by the people, who enjoy its fruits. This departure point and goal, according as they do with the people's interests, are undoubtedly distinct from pragmatism, which is measured by the pursuit and realization of private interests.

Understanding the China model demands a Marxist standpoint and methodology. It is an innovation that resulted from a long period of exploration by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Its formation constitutes a reminder that there is no universal path and model for development, nor one that never changes. Our thought and action should not be fettered by dogmas from books, nor should we idealize a model formed through practice that has proven effective. A development model that fits the specific circumstances of a particular country needs to be continuously improved in accordance with the changing situation at home and abroad and the new expectations of the people.

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